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SIPDIS

SENSITIE
SIPDIS

FOR EUR/SE, EUR/PGI, G/TIP, INL/HST, G, DRL, PRM, IWI

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TAGS: [KCRM](#) [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [SMIG](#) [KFRD](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [ELAB](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: GREECE TIP REPORT SUBMISSION 2008- PART 1

REF: State 2731

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11. (U) Sensitiv but Unclassified -- Protect Accordingly.

2.(SBU) Below are Embassy Athens' responses to the 2008 TIP report questionnaire. Text is keyed to Ref A request for "Overview" Section. This is the first of four cables.

13. (SBU) SUMMARY: Greece continued domestic and regional efforts to combat TIP in 2007-08. Greece shared comprehensive conviction statistics on arrests made in 2007. In 2007 Greece identified 100 victims, (27 more than the 83 identified last year). The government provided assistance to 35 of the victims (four less than last year) and arrested 121 traffickers (a decrease from the 206 arrests last year). The number of investigations also dropped in the past year from 70 in 2006 to 41 this year.

Greece continued to fund numerous important programs to prevent trafficking and to provide for domestic shelters, legal aid, and other victim services. It has sponsored, hosted, and funded major TIP-focused international and domestic conferences and has funded and implemented training for law enforcement authorities and others.

Formal interministerial cooperation was suspended for approximately nine months due to elections in September 2007 and the consequent reorganization of the government, but the new government has voiced its commitment to continue anti-trafficking cooperation. The MFA completed a Child Repatriation Agreement with Albania in 2006; however the agreement remains unratified even while it appears to be followed in practice. Greece signed the Council of Europe's Convention against Trafficking on 17 November 2005 and government officials affirm that Greece will ratify it in 2008. Problem areas still remain, however. The process by which victims are identified needs to be strengthened, there must be further progress in ensuring traffickers serve their sentences rather than receiving suspended sentences, and there is a continuing dearth of reliable statistics on a wide range of matters related to TIP in Greece. It is the Embassy's judgment based on the progress made this year and reflected in this report, and the need for continued improvement in key areas, that Greece should remain in Tier Two. Looking ahead,

septel will analyze how best to build momentum in the government and in public opinion for 2008-2009 with the aim of reaching Tier One before publication of the next annual TIP report. END SUMMARY.

Overview of Greece's activities to eliminate TIP:

-- A. Is the country a country of origin, transit, and/or destination for internationally trafficked men, women, or children? Provide, where possible, numbers or estimates for each group; how they were trafficked, to where, and for what purpose. Does the trafficking occur within the country's borders? Does it occur in territory outside of the government's control (e.g. in a civil war situation)?
Are any estimates or reliable numbers available as to the extent or magnitude of the problem? What is (are) the source(s) of available information on trafficking in persons or what plans are in place (if any) to undertake documentation of trafficking? How reliable are the numbers and these sources? Are certain groups of persons more at risk of being trafficked (e.g. women and children, boys versus girls, certain ethnic groups, refugees, etc.)?

Greece is a destination and transit country for international trafficking in women and children, and to a smaller degree, men. In 2007 the GoG identified 100 victims of TIP and provided assistance to 35 of them. International organizations such as IOM and authorities from other destination countries report that Greece is sometimes a transit country, with victims being moved on to Italy and other EU countries. There are no official estimates of the extent or magnitude of TIP in Greece. In January 2005 sociologist and criminologist at Panteion University Grigoris Lazos estimated, based on field research, that there were between 6,100 and 6,250 victims of sex trafficking (women and teenage girls) in Greece. Lazos, a 2005 Index on Censorship Whistleblower Award winner for his "tireless campaign against human trafficking," estimated in 2003 that there were 20,000 TIP victims in Greece. Lazos remains the only person in Greece who has made an effort at estimating the scope of the TIP phenomenon in Greece. He has attributed the decrease in

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trafficking to decreased demand for prostitution, due to lower discretionary income of Greeks. (Note: Whether actually true or not, at the time of the Lazos' study, anecdotal polling results showed Greeks believed their discretionary income had decreased and that inflation was outpacing wage increases. End Note.) Other anecdotal evidence and some NGO workers support the belief that the high rates of trafficking seen in the earliest parts of this decade have begun to subside. Without an analysis conducted in accordance with accepted statistical norms, it remains impossible to verify or refute this assertion.

Anti-child trafficking NGOs estimated in 2008 that "hundreds" of children, mainly Roma from Albania, remain victims of trafficking for labor exploitation; typically selling small items (packs of tissue or flowers), begging, or stealing. NGOs report that trafficking of children has decreased due to police efforts in Greece and because it has become easier for Albanian parents to immigrate to Greece with their children rather than "rent" their children to traffickers as was done in the past. There are teenaged girls trafficked to Greece for commercial sexual exploitation. Last year one volunteer NGO offering medical services to aliens awaiting deportation at the Petrou Ralli police detention center said that it identified one suspected child trafficking victim. The 14 year-old child, however, refused to testify against the traffickers or to take advantage of the protections eligible to victims of trafficking. This year, the same organization said it did not identify any child trafficking victims in the detention center.

The bilateral Child Repatriation Protocol with Albania, signed in Tirana in February 2006, will address some of the problems with the protection of child victims. The Protocol is designed to bring about cooperation between Albanian and Greek authorities in returning Albanian children from Greece, in locating the families of returning children and of placing children in the hands of appropriate caregivers when families cannot be located immediately. It also aims at assisting Greek and Albanian NGOs to closely monitor the reintegration and rehabilitation of the children following their

return to Albania. The agreement remains signed but not ratified, although authorities assert that it is being followed in practice. In the meantime, some NGOs allege that only a few of the children deported to Albania are actually returned to their families. NGOs claim that many of these children are literally imprisoned in Albania and slip back into Greece at the first opportunity. Greek Government officials affirm that the Greek Parliament will ratify the agreement in 2008.

-- B. Please provide a general overview of the trafficking situation in the country and any changes since the last TIP Report (e.g. changes in direction). (Other items to address may include: What kind of conditions are the victims trafficked into? Which populations are targeted by the traffickers? Who are the traffickers/exploiters? Are they independent business people? Small or family-based crime groups? Large international organized crime syndicates? What methods are used to approach victims? (Are they offered lucrative jobs, sold by their families, approached by friends of friends, etc.?) What methods are used to move the victims (e.g., are false documents being used?). Are employment, travel, and tourism agencies or marriage brokers involved with or fronting for traffickers or crime groups to traffic individuals?

Arrest statistics and police reports indicate that Greek and Eastern European criminals and mafia are the primary movers in illegal trafficking rings, though the size and nature of trafficking organizations is said to vary widely. In Thessaloniki, for example, trafficking networks are small-to-medium sized, mostly involving "night" entrepreneurs (bar and club owners) and when there is connection to Mafia organizations, it is with lower-ranking members. MPO statistics show that 121 perpetrators were arrested and charged in 2007 with violations of Article 323A and 351 of the anti-TIP law (3064/02). NGOs in Greece and abroad, the media, and police report that some travel agencies, especially those that deal with Eastern Europe, are involved in trafficking rings. NGO activists and journalists have reported in the recent past that some Greek consular officials abroad facilitated trafficking by granting visas, possibly via bribery or coercion, to TIP victims. There are no reports to indicate profits going to terrorist organizations;

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information from arrests indicates that most profits go to criminal entrepreneurs.

The Greek Government demonstrated political will at high levels in 2007-2008 to address trafficking in persons. The GoG updated its Action Plan for 2007-2008 to include plans to ratify the Palermo protocol and the Bilateral Agreement with Albania for Minor Victims of trafficking, although these were already part of the previous year's plan, and announced in early January its intention to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings.

In 2007 it improved regional police cooperation initiatives including cross-border cooperation through the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) and by further enhancing the "Ilaeira" Project, launched in December 2006, -- a regional police cooperation program involving more than twenty countries. The GoG also has several ongoing multilateral, regional programs to combat trafficking. One program, begun in 2006, is conducted in cooperation with USAID and UNICEF in Albania. Another project is designed to establish a clearing house for missing Children in southeastern Europe in cooperation with the NGO 'Smile of the Child;' and another in which the GoG extended its cooperation with NGOs by including one new organization in the 2005 Memorandum of Cooperation signed by 12 NGOs. The thirteenth NGO to sign the MoC is Nea Zoi. It continued to consult with diplomatic and consular authorities from victims' countries of origin. It has structures in place for the protection of victims and ongoing support and prevention projects in victims' countries of origin. The Greek government asserts that it lobbies and promotes trafficking awareness in international organizations including NATO, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the Human Security Network.

Some examples of the GoG's resolve to combat TIP are below:

-- Since 2005, Hellenic Aid and IOM are signatories to a humanitarian repatriation and social integration contract to ensure the humane repatriation of trafficking victims and to provide for their social reintegration into their countries of origin.

-- In May 2007, the Secretariat for Gender Equality, the Research Centre on Equality Issues and the IOM held a three-day seminar in Ioannina, Northern Greece, for Public Administration officers, including social workers, psychologists, nurses, police personnel and judges. The focus was on the combating of human trafficking and the support of women victims of sexual exploitation.

-- IOM Greece participated as a coordinating partner in the Developmental Venture for the Promotion of Equal Rights for Trafficked Individuals. The project was set up to implement an EU Equal Initiative project, co-financed by the Employment and Social Protection Ministry and the European Social Fund. One of the results of the Project was the preparation in May 2007 of a Press Guide on "Human Trafficking and the Mass Media," the scope of which is to inform journalists about issues related to the presentation and communication of human trafficking.

-- As part of the National Action Plan to Confront Trafficking in Persons, the Union of Public Prosecutors in Greece and the IOM held a second 3-day conference in November 2007 to train 300 Judges and Prosecutors in applying the protections guaranteed to victims under the Greek anti-trafficking legislation. The conference entitled "Combating Human Trafficking" was financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hellenic Aid Division (YDAS).

-- The Ministry of Public Order continued working on the "Ilareira" police regional cooperation project in 2007. Within its framework, it held a map exercise on combating human trafficking in April 2007 in the Thracian city of Komotini. The conference was under the auspices of the European Commission Vice-President Mr. Frattini and included exercises in victim recognition and referral to shelters, legal aid and assistance as well as victim protection services.

-- The Hellenic Aid Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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(YDAS) provided funds for a consultation forum between Greece and nine South-Eastern European countries along with the U.S. The event was co-organized by YDAS and the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children. In October, YDAS also financed a four-day training seminar for police and judicial personnel from Greece and South-Eastern European countries organized by the Ministry of Public Order and the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

-- YDAS and IOM participated in a consultation forum with the diplomatic and consular authorities from victims' countries of origin -- including Nigeria. The scope of which is to further promote coordination and regional cooperation as well as cooperation between NGOs, International Organizations and representatives of the GoG.

-- The Federation of Police Personnel continued training all levels of police personnel in 24 Greek cities in the recognition and referral of victims. The project was accomplished through cooperation with the NGO "Antigone," the Greek representative to the European Union Monitoring Center on Racism.

-- The GoG continued implementing the Transnational Action Against Child Trafficking (TACT) as a means for combating child trafficking from Albania to Greece. The project is financed by USAID, Hellenic Aid, UNICEF and other international donors. Project activities take place in Greece and Albania and include street-work, establishment of shelters and protection structures, as well as the humanitarian repatriation of children to Albania.

-- Secretariat for Gender Equality produced informative materials in Greek, English, Albanian and Russian about the support services available for victims.

-- IOM and Hellenic Aid continued to produce an information card in

Greek, English, Romanian and Russian to alert potential victims to the law enforcement resources available to help them. The card continues to be distributed at all check points to women entering Greece from specific countries, and is posted in at least some police stations.

-- In 2006, the Secretariat for Gender Equality launched a development assistance project in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo entitled "Support of Regional Policies Against Illegal Trafficking of Women." The program has a total budget of 100,000 euros and aims at providing direct counseling support to victims in Sarajevo and Pristina. It includes an education campaign in schools in both cities and support to the IOM structures in both Sarajevo and Pristina which are already providing assistance and protection to victims of trafficking in the Balkans. The project is still on-going.

Some NGOs including Amnesty International and the Greek Helsinki Monitor expressed concern about legal and practical shortcomings in the process of identifying trafficked women. Others, including KEPAD, European Women's Network, and Klimaka recognized that the GoG had the political will to combat human trafficking but cited the need for more effective implementation of the tools now in place.

Based on the array of activities carried out by the GoG, only some of which are shown above, it is the assessment of the Embassy that the government is demonstrating the political will to continue to address this issue, by focusing not only on the "benchmarks," but also on self-generated anti-TIP initiatives and ideas.

TIP Trends in Greece

--As in past years, NGOs and police agree that most victims trafficked to Greece are women from former Soviet states, the Balkans and Africa. These victims work in bars, brothels, and strip clubs. In 2007, Greek law enforcement authorities identified the following numbers and nationalities of TIP victims: from Albania (1 victim), Bulgaria (26), Lithuania (1), Moldova (2) Nigeria (5), Ukraine (3), Romania (43), Russia (18), Sudan (1).

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--Most victims continued to enter Greece with legal documentation, including work permits. Some recognized victims also have legal, but fraudulently obtained documentation. For example, at least four Russian victims over the past few years have reported to NGOs that their traffickers falsified visa applications to obtain visas in the victims' legal names.

Police and NGOs report that most, if not all, victims in 2007 were found in Greece with legal visas, which according to NGOs who work with victims in most cases were expedited by traffickers and issued without personal interviews.

--There was an increasing trend of immigrant smugglers locking smuggled immigrants for labor trafficking in apartments once they arrived in Greece, and demanding a "ransom" from family members in origin countries.

--There were reports of debt bondage both by victims and by source country diplomatic representatives in Greece.

--In 2007, the trend continued of increasing numbers of African, especially Nigerian, women trafficked to Greece for sexual exploitation. Some of these women believe they are under a "voodoo spell," and will not, therefore, speak to police and/or NGOs about their possible victimization, and refuse assistance offered to them. One NGO, Nea Zoi, was working to combat the effects of these so-called voodoo curses and held a one-day seminar on the topic.

-- TIP victims are subjected to withholding of documents and physical and psychological violence and threats. The trend continued of victims being trafficked into more so-called "humane" conditions, with some freedom of movement, communication, and small

stipends, but increased psychological abuse. For example, some victims' lives and the lives of their families were threatened, and traffickers told some victims they would be arrested, deported, or even killed if they went to the police.

--Some victims were forced to marry traffickers or traffickers' associates to "legalize" their status in Greece.

--NGOs report that increasing numbers of women were acting as traffickers.

Ultimately, the identification of trends becomes more difficult in the absence of reliable statistics and beyond recounting the anecdotal evidence above, little can be said reliably.

-- C. Which government agencies are involved in anti-trafficking efforts and which agency, if any, has the lead?

There are eight national ministries with responsibility for antitrafficking efforts. Nine Secretaries General (SG) from those ministries comprise the Interministerial Committee on TIP, of which the SG of the Ministry of Justice is the president. The Ministry of:

--Health (MOH) has responsibility for medical care for victims, operation of shelters, operation of a telephone hotline, coordination of repatriation program with IOM, and coordination of emergency services.

--Public Order (MPO) has responsibility for TIP police task forces, conducting TIP raids, arresting traffickers, producing police reports as the basis for prosecutions, screening and identifying victims, and education of police. The MPO has the lead in actively investigating trafficking cases. The Hellenic Police have deployed specialized anti-trafficking units in Athens and Thessaloniki since 2003.

The Greek police have 15 active anti-trafficking police units throughout Greece. The units are specially trained to conduct all TIP operations and respond to all TIP incidents encountered by other officers. Further to their operational role, the mandate of the task forces also includes the exchange of intelligence and other information with prosecutors, NGO shelters and health authorities.

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--Justice (MOJ) has responsibility for prosecutions, convictions, education of prosecutors and judges, assignment of prosecutors to TIP cases, amendment of the legislative framework and keeping a database on prosecution of trafficking crimes. Prosecutors have a special responsibility to formally grant (or deny) victim status.

--Foreign Affairs (MFA) coordinates the diplomatic/NGO/GoG working group, coordinates and negotiates bilateral and multilateral agreements, such as the Child Repatriation Agreement with Albania, and acts as a liaison between interested parties. The spokesman of the Interministerial Committee on TIP is an MFA employee with the rank of ambassador. Hellenic Aid, a part of MFA, funds NGO and IO programs and shelters, provides legal aid to victims through NGO funding, funds training of police, judges and prosecutors, and is cooperating with USAID to contribute to the Transnational Action against Child Trafficking (TACT) program in Albania.

--Interior (MOI) (including the SG for Gender Equality) has responsibility for amendment of the legislative framework regarding migration policy which includes residence permits and reflection periods, granting of residence permits, nationwide public awareness campaign, and vocational training, counseling, and social support for victims.

--Education and Employment ministries have responsibility for education, vocational training, and job placement of victims.

--Finance has responsibility for authorizing funding for TIP efforts.

-- D. What are the limitations on the government's ability to address this problem in practice? For example, is funding for police or other institutions inadequate? Is overall corruption a problem? Does the government lack the resources to aid victims?

The government continued making funds available for training of police personnel and for key civil servants, including judges, prosecutors, psychologists, social workers, and the personnel responsible for issuing residence permits. Resources to address support and assistance needs of victims are more than adequate when considering the limited number of identified victims in the last year. The government funds NGOs to maintain shelters and to provide assistance, aid and other services to victims. However, corruption within the Greek bureaucracy and a slow judicial system continue to contribute to limitations on the GoG's ability to address trafficking in practice. GoG continued efforts to educate the police force and key civil servants. Plans are in place for continued training of police, prosecutors and judges.

-- E. To what extent does the government systematically monitor its anti-trafficking efforts (on all fronts -- prosecution, prevention and victim protection) and periodically make available, publicly or privately and directly or through regional/international osments of these anti-trafficking efforts?

TIPs of Justice, Public OrdHealth, Interior and Foreign Affairs actively monitor the anti-trafficking efforts of the GoG in prosecution, prevention, and victim protection. Their inter-ministerial group on TIP, however failed to hold any meetings between March 2007 and January 2008, due to elections held in September 2007 and the subsequent organization of a new government. The GoG makes their assessments available, both publicly and privately, directly to regional organizations, international bodies, and embassies. The absence of reliable statistics, however, continues to be a barrier to assessing anti-trafficking efforts.

In 2008 as in 2007 the GoG coordinated with NGOs and IOM to provide information for this report, gathering some statistics directly from NGOs and forwarding them as-is.

Greece 2008 TIP Report Submission Continued Septel.

SPECKHARD